

City of Portland Pesticide and Fertilizer Task Force

July 26, 6:00 – 8:00 PM

Room 24

Minutes

Task Force Members Present: Councilor Mavodones, Joe Staples, Avery Kamila, Rachel Bouvier, Deven Morrill, Jesse O'Brien, Seana Cullinan, Cathy Ramsdell, Wendy Harmon, Bob Searle, Fred Dillon, Tom Estabrook (to be appointed on August 1)

Task Force Members Absent: None
Staff Present: Troy Moon

Councilor Mavodones called the meeting to order at 6 PM. He indicated that public comment would not be taken at this meeting. He introduced Tom Estabrook who will be joining the Task Force. Task Force members and staff introduced themselves.

Review of minutes

Deven Morrill moves approval of the minutes seconded by Rachel Bouvier. Motion included correcting spelling of Mr. Morrill's name and the name of a pesticide. All in favor.

Rachel Bouvier asks to help facilitate and not participate and chair suggests that her opinion matters. All agree that she should contribute the discussion in addition to helping facilitate.

Troy Moon introduces a series of questions listed on the agenda. They are designed to focus discussion on key elements of the South Portland draft ordinance.

- a. Does the Task Force want to recommend a ban or restriction on the sale of pesticides and/or fertilizers?
- b. Does the Task Force want to recommend ordinance language that would generally ban the use of chemical pesticides?
- c. Does the Task Force want to recommend a ban or a restriction on the use of pesticides on public property?
- d. Does the Task Force want to recommend a ban or a restriction on the use of pesticides on private property?

Fred Dillon updates the Task Force on changes made to the most recent version of the South Portland draft. Key changes include removal of fines for non-compliance. Enforcement would center on personal outreach by the Sustainability Coordinator to homeowners in violation of the ordinance.

Ms. Bouvier requests to begin the discussion with question b. All agree.

The group discussed how to characterize different categories of pesticides. South Portland references national lists of organic or reduced risk pesticides that may be used because it would be difficult for the city to maintain its own list. There are a small number of synthetic pesticides that the South Portland draft permits people to use. During this discussion there seemed to be consensus amongst the group that banning all synthetic pesticides would not be the best course of action. Discussion items included the merits of integrated pest management versus organic pest management, whether homeowner application is more detrimental than application by licensed applicators, and the need for broader education regarding the use of pesticides. Committee members asked about the gaps in current state regulation. Councilor Mavodones asked Mr. Moon to provide information on the current regulations issued by the Board of Pesticides Control. The Task Force should discuss whether a local ordinance needs to provide further regulation.

Cathy Ramsdell indicated that Friends of Casco Bay has been working on education for many years but it there are still issues with over use of pesticides and fertilizers. She references Portland's packaging ordinances as an example where local government adopted an ordinance to change behavior.

C. Pesticides on public property.

Troy Moon discussed differences between the City of Portland internal policy and the South Portland ordinance. A key difference is that the City policy allows synthetic pesticides on a number of high use athletic fields where using these materials in South Portland would require a waiver. Discussion returned to how to characterize pesticides and how to determine organic versus synthetic. Tom Estabrook noted that organic pesticides are not necessarily safe and noted that it is difficult to gauge their safety because many have not been tested as extensively as synthetics.

Discussion continued about whether the current City policy should be incorporated into ordinance language. Councilor Mavodones asked Mr. Moon to create a table summarizing the differences between the South Portland ordinance and the City policy. Mr. Morrill asked that the table include a summary of the draft ordinance he submitted. The table will be reviewed at the next meeting.

Councilor Mavodones asked whether there was enough information for staff to work on draft ordinance language. Mr. Moon indicated that it was not clear from the discussion thus far what direction the task force wanted to go.

Discussion returned to existing state regulations and whether they were adequate to protect the public. Seana Cullinan referenced an incident where landscapers were made ill by chemical from a recently treated lawn.

Mr. Estabrook indicated that he thought a ban on synthetic pesticides would cause homeowners to treat lawns themselves with unintended consequences and over application. Customers don't talk to the staff if they think they're skirting the law so there is no opportunity to educate them.

Cathy Ramsdell mentioned that nitrogen pollution is a major issue. Green slime is now appearing in Casco Bay which indicates a big problem. She would like to share more information at the next meeting. Fertilizer run off is a main cause of reduced water quality.

Councilor Mavodones indicates that it is 8:00 PM. He doesn't see a consensus around ordinance language yet. He indicates that discussion of an extension for the Task Force to complete its work should occur at the next meeting because there is still a lot of work to do as well as public comment.

Adjourn.